

# **Mill Revitalization Districts (MRD)**

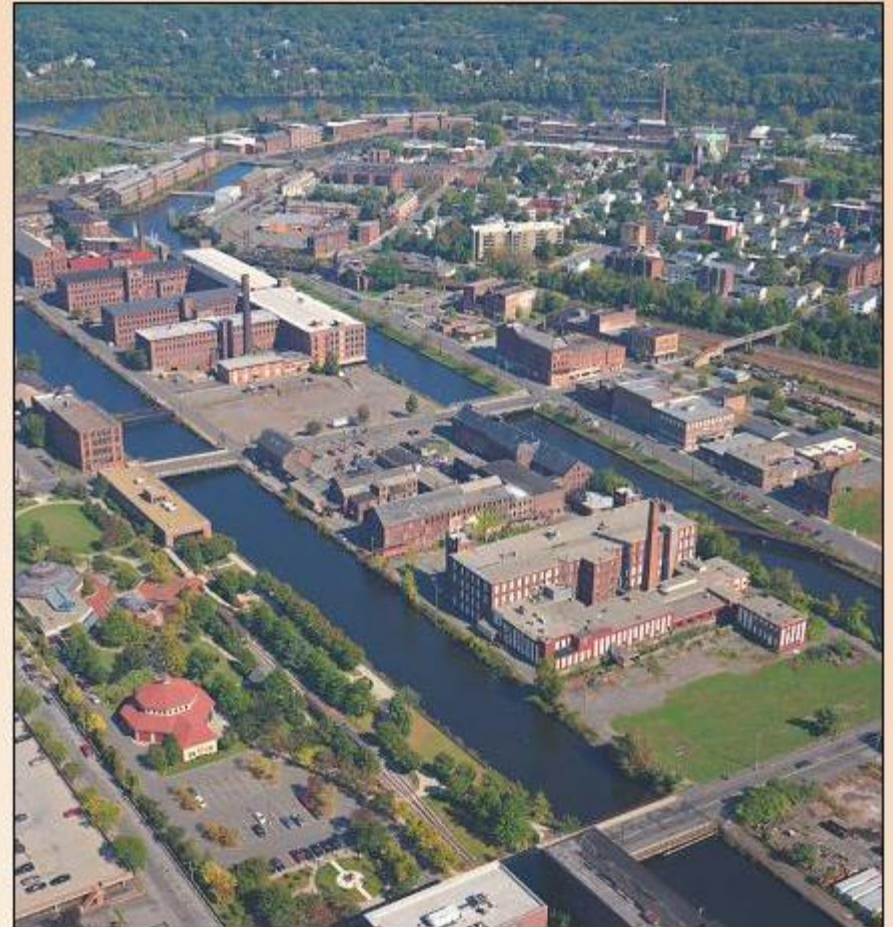


**Smart Growth / Smart Energy Toolkit**



# Mill Revitalization Districts (MRD):

**Areas that are composed of one or more historic mill buildings and surrounding structures such as worker housing, utilitarian service buildings, and canal infrastructure.**





# Typical Challenges



- **Building scale and location can make redevelopment difficult.**
- **Aging infrastructure.**
- **Environmental contamination.**

# Opportunities

- **Historic mill districts present a valuable cultural asset.**
- **Revitalizing mill districts can provide an economic boost to the entire community.**
- **Redeveloping mill buildings accomplishes multiple smart growth goals at once:**
  - **Reuse of existing structures**
  - **Compact, infill development**
  - **Environmental restoration**
  - **Increase in housing and job opportunities**

# History of Mills



- Mills first appear in Massachusetts in the early 1800's.
- Massachusetts is a national industrial leader throughout the 1800's.
- Mill villages appear in every area of the Commonwealth and are largely supported by an immigrant workforce.
- Industry declines between 1920-1940 and once thriving mill districts fall into decay.

# Redevelopment Considerations

**Successful mill revitalization depends upon four basic focus areas:**

- |                                  |                              |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>1) Site and Mill Building</b> | <b>3) Market Conditions</b>  |
| <b>2) Host Community</b>         | <b>4) Development Entity</b> |

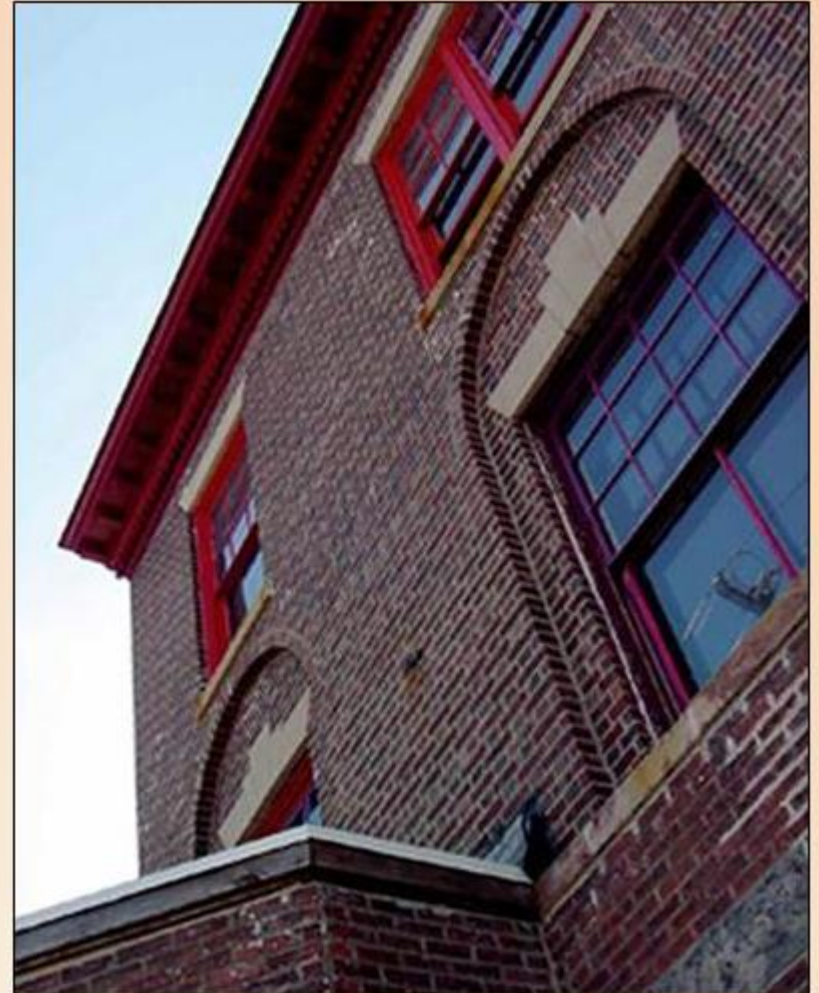




# 1) Site and Mill Building

## Considerations:

- **Location**
- **Physical conditions:**
  - Building size
  - Structural integrity
  - Roads and parking
  - Environmental condition
- **Previous uses**
- **Utility systems**
- **Codes and Regulations**



# Classic Characteristics of Mill Buildings

- 4-5 stories.
- Brick exterior, wood interior.
- Spacious rooms with high ceilings.
- Many large windows.
- Built with hazardous materials such as asbestos and lead paint.
- Small setbacks from surrounding structures.
- Narrow streets and alleys.





## 2) Host Community



### Considerations:

- **Values and commitment to revitalization.**
- **Local leadership.**
- **Mill redevelopment objectives reflected in Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances.**
- **Willingness to engage in public-private partnerships.**

# 3) Market Conditions

## Considerations:

- Identify demand for different uses.
- Conduct market feasibility study to assess costs/benefits.
- Determine whether the local and regional planning agencies support brownfield redevelopment and smart growth principles.



# 4) Development Entity



## Considerations:

- Available capital, experience, and innovative capabilities.
- Commitment to building effective public-private partnerships.
- Respect the history of the mill and the values of the community.



# **Actions that support Mill Revitalization**

- **Elicit community input and support.**
- **Build public-private partnerships.**
- **Accurately map district borders.**
- **Conduct environmental assessments.**
- **Prevent further potential structural and environmental degradation.**
- **Maintain a comprehensive inventory of pertinent information within the MRD.**

# **Actions that support Mill Revitalization (cont.)**

- Explore innovative permitting processes, zoning regulations and building codes to encourage redevelopment.**
- Include revitalization goals in the master plan and zoning ordinance.**
- Encourage flexible site plan approvals.**
- Create streamlined special permit process.**
- Establish as receiving zone under TDR provisions.**

# Public-Private Partnerships



- The Master Plan
- Zoning Assistance
- Invest in the Upgrades
- Tax Increment Financing
- Grant Writing



# Building Community Support

- Show renderings.
- Prepare Pro Forma Studies.
- Ground truth vision.
- Encourage a mix of volunteers and professionals.
- Consider an Economic Development Investment Corporation (EDIC).



# Financial Considerations

- **Positive fiscal flows through property taxes.**
- **Increased employment opportunities for local workers.**
- **Flexible space for small firms to grow and prosper.**
- **Surrounding properties reinvest, increase in value, and result in a higher tax revenue.**



# Brownfield Sites

- **Brownfield Sites can be defined as:**

**Real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.**





# Brownfield Remediation Basics

- **Environmental conditions should be clearly identified early in the redevelopment process.**
- **Remedial actions to address environmental contamination are combined with the redevelopment of a site.**
- **Potential for revisiting remedial actions must be minimized.**



# Case Study 1:

## Clock Tower Place, Maynard, MA



# Case Study: Clock Tower Place, Maynard, MA

## The Buildings



- 13 red brick buildings
- 1.1 million square feet

**Manufacturing ranged  
from carpets to computers**

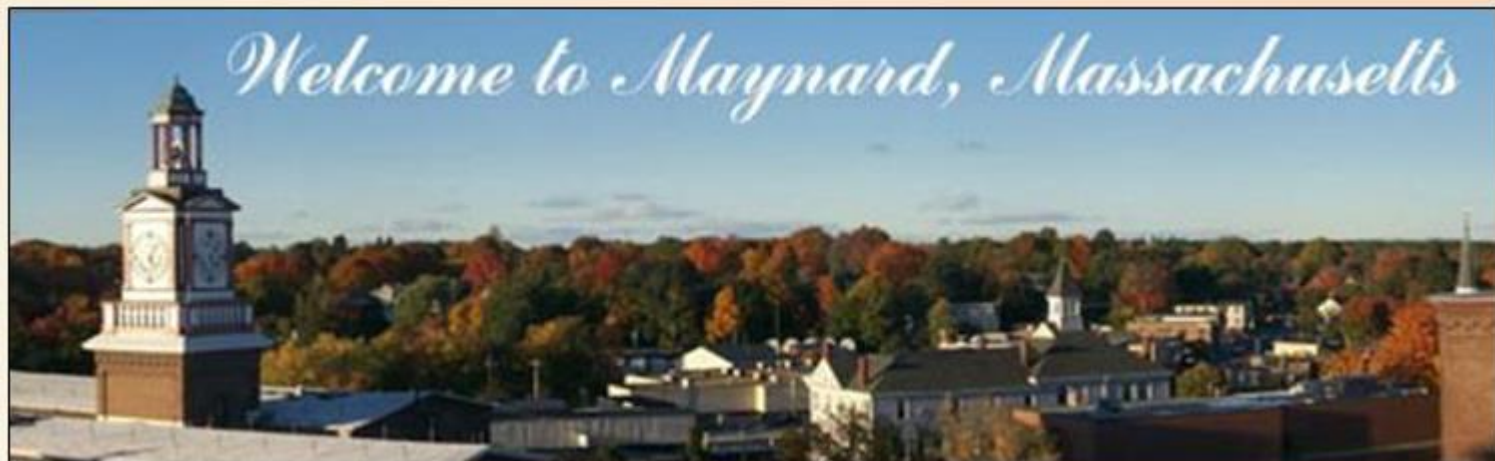




# Case Study: Clock Tower Place, Maynard, MA

## Host Community

- Mid-sized town of 10,000 residents.
- 25 miles NW of Boston.
- Community is best described as industrial, and working class.



# Case Study: Clock Tower Place, Maynard, MA

## Market Demand

**Strong market demand for office and light manufacturing space helped fill the mill with 85 different companies within the first 2 years.**



# Case Study: Clock Tower Place, Maynard, MA

## Development Entity

**Wellesley/Rosewood  
Maynard Mills L. P. (WRP)**

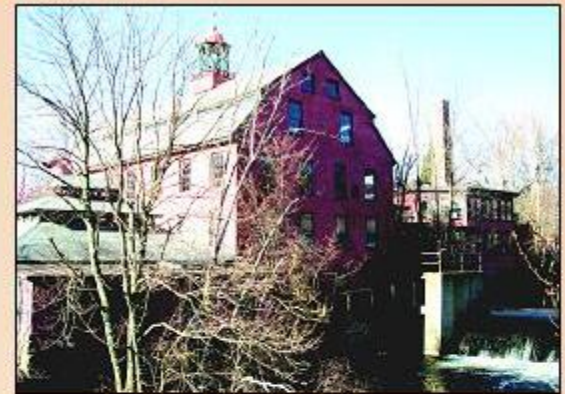
- Expertise in construction, property management, and marketing.
- Utilized Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to fund project.





# Case Study 2:

## Whitin Mill, Northbridge, MA



# Case Study: Whitin Mill, Northbridge, MA

## The Buildings

- Five red brick buildings
- 36,500 square feet
- Manufacturing ranged from cotton to steel spinning rings





# Case Study: Whitin Mill, Northbridge, MA

## Host Community



- Suburban community of 6,300 residents.
- 43 miles SW of Boston
- Strong connection to industrial heritage.

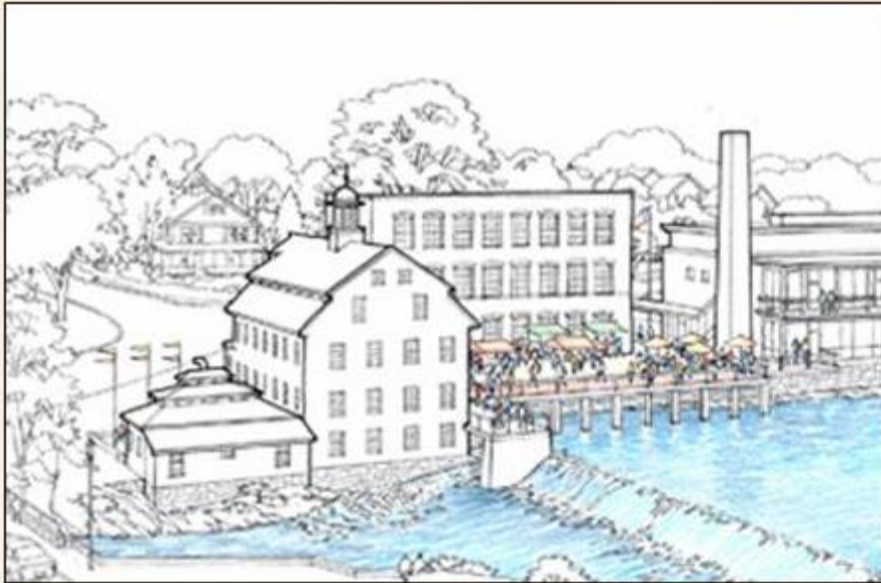




# Case Study: Whitin Mill, Northbridge, MA

## Market Demand

- Redevelopment plan responds to a town need for civic space, as well as a market demand for a restaurant and additional retail.



# Case Study: Whitin Mill, Northbridge, MA

## Development Entity

- Redeveloped by owner: **Alternatives Unlimited Inc.**
- Commitment to innovative alternative energy technology.
- Cost of redevelopment (\$9.1M) partially funded through state grants and other donations (\$3.5M).



# Case Study 3:

## Wood Mill, Lawrence, MA





# Case Study: Wood Mill, Lawrence, MA

## The Building

- 1 red brick building.
- 1.3 million square feet.
- One of the largest mill buildings in world.
- Primarily a textile mill.



# Case Study: Wood Mill, Lawrence, MA

## Host Community



- One of largest cities in MA with 70,000 residents.
- 30 miles north of Boston.
- Community has diverse population with history of immigrant, working class populace.



# Case Study: Wood Mill, Lawrence, MA

## Market Demand

- Strong market for luxury residential condos as indicated by extensive demand for purchase.
- High volume of residential units being constructed creates market for supporting commercial uses.





# Case Study: Wood Mill, Lawrence, MA Development Entity

- Bob Ansin, MassInnovation.
- \$200M invested into rehabilitation.
- Previous experience converting factories into mixed use.
- Commitment to alternative energy through geothermal installation.



# Conclusion

- **Public-private partnerships are increasingly important.**
- **Mill redevelopment typically involves confrontation, challenges, conflicting information, and emotionally charged people.**
- **There should be maximum citizen involvement, environmental protection and continuous monitoring.**
- **Not all old mill districts are suitable for revitalization**
- **But when they are, it is worth the effort!**

# Resources

- Clock Tower Place Website; Maynard, MA; Wellesley Management:  
<http://www.clocktowerplace.com/ourhistory.htm>
- Whittin Mill Complex Green Design Feasibility Study; Northbridge, MA; Beals and Thomas Inc.:  
[http://www.masstech.org/Project%20Deliverables/GB\\_GBI\\_Feasibility\\_AlternativesUnlimited.pdf](http://www.masstech.org/Project%20Deliverables/GB_GBI_Feasibility_AlternativesUnlimited.pdf)
- Monarch on the Merrimack Website; Lawrence, MA; MassInnovation:  
<http://www.monarchlofts.com/>
- Delftree Mill Reuse Plan: An Environmental Planning Project; North Adams, MA; Williams College:  
<http://www.williams.edu/CES/mattcole/resources/onlinepaperpdfs/papers/delftree.pdf>
- Adaptive Reuse and Historic Preservation Projects in Massachusetts; The Architecture Team Inc.:  
[http://www.architecturalteam.com/portfolio/project\\_list\\_pdf/AdaptiveHistoricReuse.pdf](http://www.architecturalteam.com/portfolio/project_list_pdf/AdaptiveHistoricReuse.pdf)
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; Brownfields Economic Development Initiative:  
<http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/economicdevelopment/programs/bedi/index.cfm>
- MassDevelopment Brownfields Funding and Incentive Programs:  
[http://www.massdevelopment.com/development/brownfields\\_intro.aspx](http://www.massdevelopment.com/development/brownfields_intro.aspx)
- Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection; Brownfields Program: <http://www.mass.gov/dep/cleanup/brownfie.htm>